

**“The Earth on Turtle’s Back”** (Onondaga)  
**“When Grizzlies Walked Upright”** (Modoc)  
**from The Navajo Origin Legend** (Navajo)  
**from The Iroquois Constitution** (Iroquois)

## Reading Strategy: Recognize Cultural Details

Literature reflects the culture that produces it. While you read a piece of literature, pay attention to cultural details—such as references to objects, animals, or practices that signal how people live, think, or worship—to gain cultural insight. For example, the cultural details in the three Native American myths and the Iroquois Constitution indicate how the Native Americans lived as well as what they valued in life.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the following excerpts from two of the selections. Then, answer the questions that follow.

### “The Earth on the Turtle’s Back”

There was an ancient chief in the Skyland. His young wife was expecting a child, and one night she dreamed that she saw the Great Tree uprooted. The next day she told her husband the story.

He nodded as she finished telling her dream. “My wife,” he said, “I am sad that you had this dream. It is clearly a dream of great power and, as is our way, when one has such a powerful dream we must do all we can to make it true. The Great Tree must be uprooted.”

### from The Iroquois Constitution

We now do crown you with the sacred emblem of your lordship. You shall now become a mentor of the people of the Five Nations. The thickness of your skin shall be seven spans—which is to say that you shall be proof against anger, offensive actions and criticism. Your heart shall be filled with peace and good will and your mind filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people of the confederacy.

1. Explain what you can infer about the place of dreams in Native American culture from the excerpt from “The Earth on Turtle’s Back.”  
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2. What does the excerpt from *The Iroquois Constitution* tell us about the ideals of the Iroquois people?  
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3. Explain the significance of the words “the thickness of your skin” found in *The Iroquois Constitution*. What does it mean today to be “thick-skinned”?  
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